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M A R X I S M AND N A T I O N A L I T Y

Lenin • Stalin

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MARXISM & NATIONALITY

WHAT IS A NATION ?

A nation is primarily a community, a definite community of people.

This community is not racial, nor is it tribal. The modern Italian nation was formed from Romans, Teutons, Etruscans, Greeks, Arabs; and so forth. The French nation was formed from Gauls, Romans, Britons, Teutons, and so on. The same should be said of the British, the Germans and others, who were formed into nations from peoples of different races and tribes.

Thus, a nation is not a racial or tribal, but a historically constituted community of people.

On the other hand, it is unquestionable that the great empires of Cyrus and Alexander could not be called nations, although they came to be constituted historically and were formed out of different tribes and races. They were not nations, but casual and loosely-connected conglomerations of groups, which fell apart or joined together depending upon the victories or defeats of this or that conqueror.

Thus, a nation is not a casual or ephemeral conglomeration, but a stable community of people.

But not every stable community constitutes a nation. Austria and Russia are also stable communities, but nobody calls them nations. What distinguishes a national community from a political community? One of the distinguishing features is that a national community is inconceivable without a common language, while a state need not necessarily have a common language. The Czech nation in Austria and the Polish in Russia would be impossible if each did not have a common language, whereas the integrity of Russia and Austria is not affected by the fact that there are several different languages within their borders. We are referring, of course, to the colloquial language of the people and not to the official government language.

Thus *community of language* is one of the characteristic features of a nation.

This, of course, does not mean that different nations always and everywhere necessarily speak different languages, or that all who speak one language necessarily constitute one nation. A *common* language for every nation, but not necessarily different languages for different nations. There is no nation which at one and the same time speaks several languages, but this does not mean that there may not be two nations speaking the same language. Englishmen and Americans speak one language, but they do not constitute one nation. The same is true of the Norwegians and the Danes, the English and the Irish.

But why, for instance, do not the English and Americans constitute one nation in spite of their common language?

Firstly, because they do not live together, but inhabit different territories. A nation is formed only as a result of

lengthy and systematic intercourse, as a result of the fact that people live together from generation to generation. But people cannot live together for lengthy periods unless they have a common territory. Englishmen and Americans originally inhabited the same territory, England, and constituted one nation. Later, one section of the English emigrated from England to a new territory, America, and here, in the new territory, in the course of time came to form the new American nation. Difference of territory led to the formation of different nations.

Thus *community of territory* is one of the characteristic features of a nation.

But this is not all. Community of territory in itself does not create a nation. This requires, in addition, an internal economic bond which welds the various parts of a nation into a single whole. There is no such bond between England and America, and so they constitute two different nations. But the Americans themselves would not deserve to be called a nation were not the different parts of America bound together into an economic whole, as a result of division of labour between them, the development of means of communication, and so forth.

Take the Georgians, for instance. The Georgians before the Reform* inhabited a common territory and spoke one language. Nevertheless, they did not, strictly speaking, constitute one nation, for, being split up into a number of disconnected principalities, they could not share a common economic life; for centuries they waged war against each other and pillaged each other by inciting the Persians and

* i, e, the abolition of serfdom in 1861,—Ed. Eng.

Turks against each other. The ephemeral and accidental amalgamation of the principalities which some successful king sometimes managed to bring about affected at best a superficial administrative sphere and rapidly disintegrated owing to the caprices of the princes and the indifference of the peasants. Nor could it be otherwise in economically disunited Georgia. Georgia came on to the scene as a nation only in the latter half of the nineteenth century, when the fall of serfdom and the growth of the economic life of the country, the development of means of communication and the rise of capitalism, instituted a division of labour between the various districts of Georgia, completely shattered the economic self-sufficiency of the principalities and bound them together into a single whole.

The same must be said of the other nations which have passed through the stage of feudalism and have developed capitalism.

Thus community of economic life, economic cohesion, is one of the characteristic features of a nation.

But even this is not all. Apart from the foregoing, one must take into consideration the specific spiritual complexion of the people constituting a nation. Nations differ not only in their conditions of life, but also in spiritual complexion, which manifests itself in peculiarities of national culture. If England, America and Ireland, which speak one language, nevertheless constitute three distinct nations, it is in no small measure due to the peculiar psychological make-up which they developed from generation to generation as a result of dissimilar conditions of existence.

Of course, by itself the psychological make up, or, as it is otherwise called, the "national character" is something indefinable to the observer, but inasmuch as it manifests itself in a distinctive culture common to the nation it is definable and cannot be ignored.

Needless to say, "national character" is not a thing that is fixed once and for all, but is modified by changes in the conditions of life, but since it exists at every given moment, it leaves its imprint on the physiognomy of the nation.

Thus *community of psychological make-up*, which manifests itself in a community of culture, is one of the characteristic features of a nation.

We have now exhausted the characteristic features of a nation.

A nation is a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture.

It goes without saying that a nation, like every other historical phenomenon, is subject to the law of change, has its history, its beginning and end.

It must be emphasised that none of the above characteristics is by itself sufficient to define a nation. On the other hand, it is sufficient for a single one of these characteristics to be absent and the nation ceases to be a nation.

It is possible to conceive people possessing a common "national character", but they cannot be said to constitute a single nation if they are economically disunited, inhabit

different territories, speak different languages, and so forth. Such, for instance, are the Russian, Galician, American, Georgian and Caucasian Highland Jews, who do not, in our opinion, constitute a single nation.

It is possible to conceive people with a common territory and economic life who, nevertheless, would not constitute a single nation because they have no common language and no common "national character". Such, for instance, are the Germans and Letts in the Baltic Region.

Finally, the Norwegians and the Danes speak one language, but they do not constitute a single nation owing to the absence of the other characteristics.

It is only when all these characteristics are present that we have a nation.

It is, therefore, clear that there is in fact no single distinguishing characteristic of a nation. There is only a sum total of characteristics, of which, when nations are compared, one characteristic (national character), or another (language), or a third (territory, economic conditions), stands out in sharper relief. A nation constitutes the combination of all these characteristics taken together.

[Stalin: Marxism and the National and Colonial Question pp. 5—13].

THREE PERIODS OF DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL PROBLEM

The first period is the period which saw the break-up of feudalism in the West and the triumph of capitalism. The

formation of people into nations occurred during this period. I am referring to such countries as Great Britain (without Ireland), France and Italy. In the West—in Great Britain, France, Italy, and partly in Germany—the period of the break-up of feudalism and the formation of people into nations on the whole coincided in time with the period which saw the appearance of the centralised states, and as a result the nations in their development became invested in state forms. And inasmuch as there were no other national groups of any considerable size within these states, such a thing as national oppression was not known. In Eastern Europe, on the contrary, the process of formation of nationalities and the elimination of feudal disunity did not coincide in time with the process of formation of centralised states. I am referring to Hungary, Austria and Russia. In these countries capitalist development had not yet begun, it was perhaps only incipient, but the necessity of taking defensive measures against the invasions of the Turks, Mongols and other Oriental peoples demanded that centralised states capable of withstanding the onslaught of the invaders should be formed without delay. And since in Eastern Europe the process of formation of centralised states proceeded more rapidly than the process of formation of people into nations, mixed states arose, each made up of several nationalities which had not yet formed themselves into nations but which were already united in a common state.

Thus, the first period is marked by the appearance of nationalities in the dawn of capitalism: in Western Europe we observe the birth of purely national states to which national oppression is unknown, whereas in the East we observe the birth of multi-national states with one more

developed nation at the head and the remaining, less developed, nations in a state of political, and later of economic, subjection to the dominant nation. These multi-national states of the East were the birthplace of that national oppression which gave rise to national conflicts, national movements, the national problem and the various methods of solving that problem.

The second period in the development of national oppression and the methods of combating it coincides with the period which saw the appearance of imperialism: when capitalism, in its search for markets, raw materials, fuel and cheap labour power, and in the competition for the export of capital and the possession of the great rail and sea routes, breaks out of the confines of the national state and extends its territory at the expense of near and distant neighbours. In this second period, the old national states in the West—Great Britain, Italy and France—cease to be national states, in other words, by virtue of the seizure of new territories they become converted into multi-national, colony-owning states, and thereby come to be an arena for that national and colonial oppression which already exists in Eastern Europe. In Eastern Europe this period is marked by the awakening and invigoration of subject nations (Czechs, Poles, Ukrainians), which, as a result of the imperialist war, have led to the dissolution of the old bourgeois multi-national states and the formation of new national states enthralled to what are known as the Great Powers.

The third period is the Soviet period, the period of the destruction of capitalism and the abolition of national oppression, in which the question of ruling and subject

nations, of colonies and mother countries, is being consigned to the archives of history, in which, on the territory of the R. S. F. S. R., we see nationalities which possess equality of right and equal opportunities for development, but which still preserve a certain historical heritage of inequality owing to their economic, political and cultural backwardness. The substance of this inequality of nationalities consists in the fact that, as a result of historical development, we have received a heritage from the past by virtue of which one nationality, the Great Russian nationality, is more developed politically and industrially than the other nationalities. Hence the existence of actual inequality, which cannot be eradicated in one year, but which must be eradicated, and eradicated by economic, political and cultural assistance being rendered to the backward nationalities.

These are the three periods of development of the national problem known to us historically.

[Stalin : Marxism and the National and Colonial
Question pp. 99—101]

NATION—A PRODUCT OF RISING CAPITALISM

A nation is not merely a historical category, but a historical category belonging to a definite epoch, the epoch of rising capitalism. The process of elimination of feudalism and development of capitalism was at the same time a process of amalgamation of people into nations. Such for instance, was the case in Western Europe. The British, French, Germans, Italians and others formed themselves into

nations at the time of the victorious advance of capitalism and its triumph over feudal disunity.

[Stalin : Marxism and the National and Colonial Question, P. 13]

Throughout the world, the period of the final victory of capitalism over feudalism was linked up with national movements. The economic basis of these movements is that in order to achieve complete victory for commodity production the bourgeoisie must capture the home market, must have politically united territories with a population speaking the same language, while all obstacles to the development of this language and to its consolidation in literature are removed.

Language is the most important means of human intercourse, unity of language and unimpeded development are the most important conditions of a genuinely free and extensive commercial turnover corresponding to modern capitalism, of a free and broad grouping of the population in all their separate classes; finally, they are a condition for the close connection between the market and each and every proprietor and petty proprietor, seller and buyer.

[Lenin : Selected Works, IV, p. 250]

RISE OF NATIONAL STATES IN WESTERN EUROPE

The formation of *national states*, under which these requirements of modern capitalism are best satisfied, is there-

fore, the tendency of every national movement. The deepest economic factors urge towards this goal, and for the whole of Western Europe, nay, for the entire civilised world, the typical, normal state for the capitalist period is, therefore, the national state.

[Lenin : S. W., IV, p. 250]

In Western continental Europe the period of bourgeois democratic revolutions embraces a fairly definite period of time, approximately from 1789 to 1871. It was this epoch that was the epoch of national movements and the creation of national states. After the termination of this period, Western Europe was transformed into a settled system of bourgeois states, and, as a general rule, single-nation states.

[Lenin : S. W. IV, p. 260]

The formation of nations in these instances at the same time signified their conversion into independent national states. The British, French and other nations are at the same time British, French, etc., states. Ireland, which did not participate in this process, does not alter the general picture.

[Stalin: Marxism and the National and Colonial Question, p. 13]

Consequently, if we want to understand the meaning of self-determination of nations without juggling with legal definitions, without "inventing" abstract definitions, but examining the historical and economic conditions of the

national movements, we shall inevitably reach the conclusion that self-determination of nations means the political separation of these nations from other national bodies, the formation of an independent national state.

[Lenin: S. W., IV, p. 250]

NATIONAL WARS

A new epoch in the history of mankind was opened by the great French Revolution. From that time down to the Paris Commune, *i. e.* from 1789 to 1871, some of the wars had a bourgeois progressive character, being waged for national liberation. In other words, the main contents and the historic significance of those wars consisted in overthrowing absolutism and feudalism, at least in undermining those institutions, or in casting off the yoke of foreign nations. Therefore, these wars can be considered progressive.

When such wars were waged, all honest revolutionary democrats as well as Socialists always sympathised with that side (*i. e.*, with that bourgeoisie) which helped to overthrow or at least to undermine the most dangerous foundations of feudalism and absolutism, or to combat the oppression of foreign peoples. For instance, the fundamental historic significance of the revolutionary wars of France, notwithstanding the tendency to plunder and conquer foreign lands on the part of the French, consists in the fact that they shook and destroyed feudalism and absolutism in the whole of the old Europe hitherto based on serf labour.

[Lenin: C. W., XVIII, p. 219; L. L., p. 9]

The main objective contents of the historical phenomena of the wars, not only of 1855, 1859, 1864, 1870, but also of 1877 (Russo-Turkish War) and 1896 to 1897 (the war between Turkey and Greece and the Armenian uprising) were bourgeois national movements, convulsions of bourgeois society freeing itself from various aspects of feudalism. There could have been no thought at that time about a really independent action of *modern* democracy, which fits the epoch of over-ripeness and decay of the bourgeoisie in a number of the leading countries. The main class which then, during the wars and participating in the wars, moved on an ascending line, and which alone could march with overwhelming force against the feudal absolutist institutions was the bourgeoisie. In various countries, represented by various strata of *propertied* producers of commodities, this bourgeoisie was progressive in various degrees, sometimes, like part of the Italian bourgeoisie in 1859, even revolutionary.

The common feature of the epoch, however, was the progressivism of the bourgeoisie, *i.e.*, its yet undecided unfinished struggle against feudalism.....The movement of the people in the main countries touched by the war was at that time generally democratic, *i.e.*, bourgeois-democratic by its economic and class contents. It is quite obvious that *no other question* could have been raised at that time outside of the question: the success of which bourgeoisie, the success of which combination of forces, the failure of which reactionary forces (feudal absolutist forces hampering the rise of the bourgeoisie) promised more "elbow room" for modern democracy.....

[Lenin: C. W., XVIII, pp. 126—9]

MULTI-NATIONAL STATES OF EASTERN EUROPE

While in the West the nations developed into states, in the East, multi-national states were formed, each consisting of several nationalities. Such are Austria-Hungary and Russia. In Austria, the Germans proved to be politically the most developed, and they took it upon themselves to amalgamate the Austrian nationalities into a state. In Hungary, the most adapted for state organisation were the Magyars—the kernel of the Hungarian nationalities—and it was they who united Hungary. In Russia, the role of welder of nationalities was assumed by the Great Russians, who were headed by an aristocratic military bureaucracy, historically formed, powerful and well-organised.

Such was the case in the East.

This peculiar method of formation of states could take place only where feudalism had not yet been eliminated, where capitalism was feebly developed, where the nationalities which had been forced into the background had not yet been able to consolidate themselves economically into integral nations.

But capitalism also began to develop in the Eastern states. Trade and means of communication were developing. Large towns were springing up. The nations were becoming economically consolidated. Capitalism, erupting into the tranquil life of the ousted nationalities, was arousing them and stirring them into action. The development of the Press and the theatre, the activity of the Reichsrat (Austria) and of the Duma (Russia) were helping to strengthen

"national sentiments." The intelligentsia that had arisen was being imbued with "the national idea" and was acting in the same direction.... .

But the ousted nations, aroused to independent life, could no longer shape themselves into independent national states; they encountered the powerful resistance of the ruling strata of the dominant nations, which had long ago assumed the control of the state. They were too late!

In this way the Czechs, Poles, etc., formed themselves into nation in Austria: the Croats, etc., in Hungary; the Letts, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Georgians, Armenians, etc., in Russia. What had been an exception in Western Europe (Ireland) became the rule in the East.

In the West, Ireland responded to its exceptional position by a national movement. In the East, the awakened nations were bound to respond in the same fashion.

Thus arose the circumstances which impelled the young nations of Eastern Europe into the path of struggle.

The struggle began and spread, to be sure, not between nations as a whole, but between the ruling classes of the dominant and the ousted nations. The struggle is usually conducted by the urban petty bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation against the big bourgeoisie of the dominant nation (Czechs and Germans), or by the rural bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation against the landlords of the dominant nation (Ukrainians in Poland), or by the whole "national" bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations against the ruling nobility of the dominant nation (Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine in Russia).

The bourgeoisie plays the leading rôle.

The chief problem for the young bourgeoisie is the problem of the market. Its aim is to sell its goods and to emerge victorious from competition with the bourgeoisie of another nationality. Hence its desire to secure its "own," its "home" market. The market is the first school in which the bourgeoisie learns its nationalism.

[Stalin : Marxism and the National and Colonial Question., pp. 13—15]

In Eastern Europe and in Asia the period of bourgeois-democratic revolutions only started in 1905. The revolutions in Russia, Persia, Turkey, and China, the wars in the Balkans, such is the chain of world events of *our* period in our "Orient." And only the blind can fail to see the awakening of a *whole series* of bourgeois-democratic national movements, strivings to create nationally independent and nationally united states in this chain of events. It is precisely and solely because Russia and the neighbouring countries are passing through this epoch that we require an item in our programme on the right of nations to self-determination.

[Lenin : S. W., IV, p. 260]

MODERN IMPERIALIST STATES

The subsequent growth of capitalism in Europe, the need for new markets, the search for raw materials and fuel, and, finally, the development of imperialism, the export of capital and the necessity of protecting the great sea and rail

routes, have led, on the one hand, to the seizure of new territories by the old national states and the conversion of the latter into multi-national (colonial) states with the national oppression and national conflicts natural to multi-national states (Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy) and, on the other hand, have intensified the strivings of the dominant nations in the old multi-national states not merely to preserve the old state boundaries but to extend them and to subjugate new (weak) nationalities at the expense of neighbouring states. In this way the national problem was enlarged and finally, in the very course of events, became merged with the general problem of the colonies, while national oppression was transformed from an internal question into an inter-state question, into a question of conflict (and war) between the "Great" imperialist powers for the subjugation of weak and non-sovereign nationalities.

[Stalin : Marxism and the National and
Colonial Question. p. 89]

TWO HISTORICAL TENDENCIES

Developing capitalism knows of two historical tendencies in the national question. The first is the awakening of national life and of national movements, the struggle against all national oppression, the creation of national states. The second is the development and growing frequency of all sorts of relations between nations, the breaking down of national barriers, the creation of the international unity of capital, and of economic life in general, of politics, of science and so forth. Both tendencies are the universal law of

capitalism. The first predominates at the beginning of its development, the second characterises capitalism mature and approaching its transformation into a Socialist society.

[Lenin : "Critical Remarks on the National Question."
Collected Works, Vol. XVII.]

For communism.....these tendencies are only two sides of a single cause—that of the emancipation of the oppressed peoples from the yoke of imperialism ; for communism knows that the amalgamation of the nations into a single world economic system is possible only on the basis of mutual confidence and voluntary agreement ; that the formation of a voluntary amalgamation of nations must be preceded by the separation of the colonies from the "integral" imperialist "whole", by the transformation of the colonies into independent states.

[Stalin : Marxism and the National and Colonial
Question p. 197.]

RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION

The right of self-determination means that only the nation itself has the right to determine its destiny, that no one has the right *forcibly* to interfere in the life of the nation, to *destroy* its schools and other institutions, to *violate* its habits and customs, to *repress* its language, or *curtail* its rights.

This, of course, does not mean that Social-Democrats will support every custom and institution of a nation,

While combating the exercise of violence against any nation, they will only support the right of the nation to determine its own destiny, at the same time agitating against the noxious customs and institutions of that nation in order to enable the toiling strata of the nation to emancipate themselves from them.

The right of self-determination means that a nation can arrange its life according to its own will. It has the right to arrange its life on the basis of autonomy. It has the right to enter into federal relations with other nations. It has the right to complete secession. Nations are sovereign and all nations are equal.

This, of course, does not mean that Social-Democrats will support every demand of a nation. A nation has the right even to return to the old order of things, but this does not mean that Social-Democrats will subscribe to such a decision if taken by any institution of the said nation. The obligations of Social-Democrats, who defend the interests of the proletariat, and the rights of a nation, which consists of various classes, are two different things.

In fighting for the right of nations to self-determination, the aim of the Social-Democrats is to put an end to the policy of national oppression, to render it impossible, and thereby to remove the grounds of hostility between nations, to take the edge off that hostility and reduce it to a minimum.

This is what essentially distinguishes the policy of the class-conscious proletariat from the policy of the bourgeoisie which attempts to aggravate and fan the national struggle, and to prolong and sharpen the national movement.

[Stalin : *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*, pp. 18—19]

in the matter and influence the will of the nation in a definite way? Should they not come forward with a definite plan for the solution of the problem which would be most advantageous to the Tatar masses?

But what solution would be most compatible with the interests of the toiling masses? Autonomy, federation or separation?

All these are problems the solution to which will depend on the concrete historical conditions in which the given nation finds itself.

Nay, more. Conditions, like everything else, change, and a decision which is correct at one particular time may prove to be entirely unsuitable at another.....

It follows from this that the solution of the national problem can be arrived at only if due consideration is paid to historical conditions in their development.

The economic, political and cultural conditions of a given nation constitute the only key to the question of *how* a particular nation ought to arrange its life and *what forms* its future constitution ought to take. It is possible that a specific solution of the problem will be required for each nation. If, indeed, a dialectical approach to a question is required anywhere it is required here, in the national question.

[Stalin: Marxism and the National and
Colonial Question pp. 20-21]

The question of the *right* of nations freely to secede must not be confused with the question that a nation must

necessarily secede at any given moment. This latter question must be settled by the party of the proletariat in each particular case independently, according to circumstances. When we recognise the right of oppressed peoples to secede, the *right* to determine their political destiny, we do not thereby settle the question of whether particular nations *should* secede from the Russian state at the given moment. I may recognise the right of a nation to secede, but that does not mean that I compel it to secede. A people has a right to secede, but it may or may not exercise that right, according to circumstances. Thus we are at liberty to agitate for or against secession, according to the interests of the proletariat, of the proletarian revolution. Hence, the question of secession must be determined in each particular case independently, in accordance with existing circumstances, and for this reason the question of the recognition of the right to secession must not be confused with the expediency of secession in any given circumstances. For instance, I personally would be opposed to the secession of Transcaucasia, bearing in mind the general level of development in Transcaucasia and in Russia, the conditions of the struggle of the proletariat, and so forth. But if, nevertheless, the peoples of Transcaucasia were to demand secession, they would, of course, secede, and would not encounter opposition on our part.

[Stalin: Marxism and the National and Colonial Question p. 64]

INTERNATIONALISM AND FUSION OF NATIONS

The working class could not grow strong, could not become mature and formed, without "constituting itself

within the nation," without being "national" ("though not in the bourgeois sense of the word"). But the development of capitalism more and more breaks down national barriers, destroys national seclusion, substitutes class antagonisms for national antagonisms. It is, therefore, perfectly true that in the developed capitalist countries "the working men have no country" and that "united action" of the workers, of the civilised countries at least, "is one of the first conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat." (*The Communist Manifesto*.)

[Lenin: S. W., XI, p. 35; Marx, Engels, Marxism, p. 27.]

The way to the one goal: to complete equality, to the most intimate contact and to the subsequent *fusion of all* nations obviously proceeds here by different roads in each concrete case—in the same way, let us say, as the direction to a point in the middle of this page is towards the left from one side, and towards the right from the other. If a Socialist belonging to a large, oppressing, annexing nation, in advocating the fusion of nations in general, were to forget even for one moment that 'his' Nicholas II, 'his' Wilhelm, George, Pioncare, etc., *also stands for fusion* with the small nations (by means of annexations)—Nicholas II for 'fusion' with Galicia, Wilhelm II for 'fusion' with Belgium, etc.—such a Socialist would prove to be a ridiculous doctrinaire in theory and an abettor of imperialism in practice.

"The weight of emphasis in internationalist education for the workers in the oppressing countries must necessarily be that they must preach and uphold the right of secession

for the oppressed countries. Without this there can be no internationalism. It is our right and duty to treat every Socialist of an oppressing nation who *fails* to conduct such propaganda as an imperialist and a scoundrel. This is an unconditional demand, even if the *chance* of secession being possible and 'feasible' before the introduction of socialism is only one in a thousand.....

"On the other hand, a Socialist belonging to a small nation must concentrate the weight of his agitation on the *second* word of our general formula: '*voluntary amalgamation*' of nations. Without violating his duties as an internationalist he may be in favour of *either* the political independence of his nation *or* its inclusion in the neighbouring state, X, Y, Z, etc. But in all cases he must fight *against* small-nation narrow-mindedness, reserve and aloofness, he must fight for the recognition of the general and the whole, for the subordination of the interests of the particular to the interests of the general.

"Those who have not thought over the question thoroughly think there is a 'contradiction' in Socialists of oppressing nations insisting on the 'right of *secession*' while Socialists of oppressed nations insist on the 'right to *amalgamation*.' A little reflection, however, will show that from *this* position there is not, nor can there be, any *other* road towards internationalism and the fusion of nations."

[Lenin: "The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up," Collected Works, Vol. XIX.]

Bourgeois nationalists always and everywhere flaunt "general" phrases about a "federation of nations" in genera

and about "economic liberty of all nations great and small." But Socialists, unlike the bourgeois nationalists, have always said and now say: rhetoric about "economic liberty of all nations great and small" is disgusting hypocrisy as long as *certain* nations (for example, England and France) invest abroad, that is to say, lend at usurious interest to small and backward nations *scores and scores of billions of francs*, and as long as the small and weak nations are in bondage to them.

[Lenin : S. W. V, p. 25:]

The aim of Socialism is not only to abolish the present division of mankind into small states and all-national isolation, not only to bring the nations closer to each other, but also to merge them.....

Just as mankind can achieve the abolition of classes only by passing through the transition period of the dictatorship of the oppressed class, so mankind can achieve the inevitable merging of nations only by passing through the transition period of complete liberation of all the oppressed nations, *i. e.*, their freedom to secede.

[Lenin : S. W., V, p. 270]

NATIONAL MOVEMENTS

The bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation, repressed on every hand, is naturally stirred into movement. It appeals to its "native folk" and begins to cry out about the "fatherland," claiming that its own cause is the cause of the nation as a whole. It recruits itself an army from among its "coun-

trymen" in the interests of.....the "fatherland." Nor do the "folk" always remain unresponsive to its appeals, they rally around its banner: the repression from above affects them also and provokes their discontent.

Thus the national movement begins.

The strength of the national movement is determined by the degree to which the wide strata of the nation, the proletariat and peasantry, participate in it.

Whether the proletariat rallies to the banner of bourgeois nationalism depends on the degree of development of class contradictions, on the class-consciousness and degree of organisation of the proletariat. A class conscious proletariat has its own tried banner, and it does not need to march under the banner of the bourgeoisie.

As far as the peasants are concerned, their participation in the national movement depends primarily on the character of the repression. If the repression affects the "land," as was the case in Ireland, then the mass of the peasants immediately rally to the banner of the national movement.

On the other hand, if, for example, there is no serious *anti-Russian* nationalism in Georgia, it is primarily because there are no Russian landlords there or a Russian big bourgeoisie to supply the fuel for such nationalism among the masses. In Georgia there is *anti-Armenian* nationalism, but this is because there is an Armenian big bourgeoisie there which, beating the small and still unconsolidated Georgian bourgeoisie, drives the latter to anti-Armenian nationalism.

Depending on these factors, the national movement either assumes a mass character and steadily grows (as in Ireland

and Galicia), or it is converted into a series of petty collisions, degenerating into squabbles and "fights" over sign-boards (as in some of the towns of Bohemia).

The nature of the national movement, of course, will not everywhere be the same: it is wholly determined by the diverse demands made by the movement. In Ireland the movement bears an agrarian character; in Bohemia it is concerned with "language" in one place the demand is for civil equality and religious freedom, in another for the nation's "own" officials or its own Assembly. The diversity of demands not infrequently reveals the diverse features which characterise a nation in general (language, territory, etc.).....

Such, in general, are the forms and features of the national movement.

From what has been said it will be clear that the national struggle under the conditions of *rising* capitalism is a struggle of the bourgeois classes among themselves. Sometimes the bourgeoisie succeeds in drawing the proletariat into the national movement, and the national struggle *externally* assumes a "nation-wide" character. But this is so only externally. *In its essence* it is always a bourgeois struggle, one that is chiefly favourable to and suitable for the bourgeoisie.

But it does not follow from this that the proletariat should not put up a fight against the policy of national oppression.

Limitation of freedom of movement, disfranchisement, suppression of language, restriction of schools, and other forms of repression affect the workers no less, if not more,

than the bourgeoisie. Such a state of affairs can only serve to retard the free development of the intellectual forces of the proletariat of subject nations. There can be no possibility of a full development of the intellectual faculties of the Tatar or Jewish worker if he is not allowed to use his native language at meetings and lectures, and if his schools are closed down.

But the policy of national repression is dangerous to the cause of the proletariat also on another account. It diverts the attention of large strata of the population from social questions, questions of the class struggle, to national questions, questions "common" to the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. And this creates a favourable soil for lying propaganda regarding "harmony of interests," for glossing over the class interests of the proletariat and for the intellectual enslavement of the workers. This creates a serious obstacle to the work of uniting the workers of all nationalities. If a considerable proportion of the Polish workers are still in intellectual bondage to the bourgeois nationalists, if they still stand aloof from the international labour movement, it is chiefly because the age-long anti-Polish policy of the "powers that be" creates the soil for, and hinders the emancipation of the workers from this bondage.....

But the workers are interested in the complete amalgamation of all their comrades into a single international army, in their speedy and final emancipation from intellectual subjection to the bourgeoisie, and in the full and free development of the intellectual forces of their brothers, whatever the nation to which they belong.

The workers therefore combat and will continue to combat the policy of national oppression in all its forms, subtle

or crude, as also the policy of inciting nations against each other in all its forms.....

[Stalin: Marxism and the National and Colonial Question, pp. 15—18]

This of course does not mean that the proletariat must support *every* national movement, everywhere and always, in every single, concrete instance. The point is that support must be given to those national movements which tend to weaken imperialism and bring about the overthrow of imperialism, and not to strengthen and preserve it. Cases occur when the national movements in certain oppressed countries come into conflict with the interests of the development of the proletarian movement. In such cases, of course, support is entirely out of the question. The rights of nations are not an isolated and self-contained question, but part of the general question of the proletarian revolution, a part which is subordinate to the whole and which must be dealt with from the point of view of the whole. In the forties of the last century, Marx favoured the national movement of the Poles and the Hungarians and was opposed to the national movement of the Czechs and the Southern Slavs. Why? Because the Czechs and the Southern Slavs were at that time "reactionary nations," "Russian outposts" in Europe, outposts of absolutism, whereas the Poles and the Hungarians were "revolutionary nations" which were fighting absolutism; because to give support to the national movement of the Czechs and Southern Slavs at that time would have been to give indirect support to tsarism, a most dangerous enemy of the revolutionary movement in Europe.

"The various demands of democracy," writes Lenin, "including self-determination, are not an absolute, they are *particles* of the general democratic (at present general socialist) *world* movement. In individual concrete cases, a particle may contradict the whole; if it does, then it must be rejected."

[The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up, Collected Works Vol. XIX.]

Such is the position with regard to the various national movements, with regard to the possible reactionary character of these movements, that is, of course, if they are examined concretely, from the point of view of the interests of the revolutionary movement and not from the formal point of view, from the point of view of abstract rights.

The same must be said of the revolutionary character of national movements in general. The unquestionably revolutionary character of the overwhelming majority of national movements is as relative and specific as the possible reactionary character of certain national movements. The revolutionary character of a national movement in the conditions of imperialist oppression does not necessarily presuppose the existence of proletarian elements in the movement, the existence of a revolutionary or a republican programme of the movement, the existence of a democratic basis for the movement. The struggle which the Emir of Afghanistan is waging for the independence of his country is objectively a *revolutionary* struggle, despite the monarchist views of the Emir and his entourage, for it weakens, disintegrates and undermines imperialism,

whereas the struggle waged by "desperate" democrats and "Socialists," "revolutionaries" and republicans, like, for example, Kerensky and Tsereteli, Renaudel and Scheidemann, Chernov and Dan, Henderson and Clynes during the imperialist war, was a *reactionary* struggle, for it resulted in the embellishment, the reinforcement and the victory of imperialism. For the same reason, the struggle which the Egyptian merchants and bourgeois intellectuals are waging for the independence of their country is objectively *revolutionary* despite the bourgeois origin and bourgeois calling of the leaders of the Egyptian national movement and despite the fact that they are opposed to socialism; whereas the fight the British Labour Government is waging to perpetuate Egypt's state of subjection is for the same reason a *reactionary* struggle, despite the proletarian origin and the proletarian calling of the members of that government and despite the fact that they are "for" socialism.....

Lenin was right in saying that the national movement of the oppressed countries should be judged not from the point of view of formal democracy, but from the point of view of the actual results in the sum total of the struggle against imperialism, that is to say, "not in an isolated way, but on a world scale." ("The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up," Collected Works, Vol. XIX.)

[Stalin: Marxism and the National and
Colonial Question. pp. 193-195]

CAPITALISM AND THE NATIONAL PROBLEM

Even as early as the last century the development of capitalism betrayed a tendency to internationalise the means

of production and exchange, to eliminate national aloofness, to bring peoples into closer economic relations, and gradually to merge vast territories into a single connected whole. The further development of capitalism, the development of the world market, the perfection of the great rail and sea routes, the export of capital, and so on, still further accentuated this tendency and bound all kinds of peoples by the ties of international division of labour and universal interdependence. Inasmuch as this process was a reflection of a colossal development of productive forces, inasmuch as it helped to destroy national isolation and the contradiction between the interests of the various peoples, it was and is a progressive process, for it is creating the material conditions for a future world socialist economic system.

But this tendency developed in specific forms which were completely at variance with its intrinsic historical significance. The interdependence of peoples and the economic amalgamation of territories arose in the course of the development of capitalism not as a result of the collaboration of peoples enjoying equal status, but by means of the subjection of certain peoples by others, by means of the oppression and exploitation of less developed peoples by more developed peoples. Colonial plunder and annexations, national oppression and inequality, imperialist violence and arbitrary rule, colonial slavery and national subjection, and, finally, the struggle among the "civilized" nations for mastery over the "uncivilised" peoples—such were the forms in which the process of economic amalgamation of peoples took place. For this reason we find that, side by side with the tendency to amalgamation, there grew up a tendency to destroy the violent forms assumed by this

amalgamation, a struggle for the emancipation of the oppressed colonies and dependent nationalities from the imperialist yoke. Inasmuch as the latter tendency implied a revolt of the oppressed masses against imperialist forms of amalgamation, inasmuch as it demanded the amalgamation of peoples on the basis of collaboration and voluntary union, it was and is a progressive tendency, for it is creating the psychological conditions for the future world socialist economic system.

The conflict between these two principal tendencies, expressed in forms that are natural to capitalism, fills the history of the multi-national bourgeois states during the last half century. The fact that the contradiction between these tendencies is irreconcilable within the framework of capitalist development was the basic reason for the intrinsic insolvency and the organic instability of the bourgeois colonial states. Inevitable conflicts within such states and inevitable wars between such states, disintegration of the old colonial states and the formation of new ones, a new drive for colonies and again the disintegration of multi-national states, leading to a new re-arrangement of the political map of the world—such are the results of this fundamental contradiction. The disintegration of the old Russia, of Austria-Hungary and of Turkey on the one hand, and the history of such colony owning states as Great Britain and the old Germany on the other; and, lastly, the "great" imperialist war and the growth of the revolutionary movement among the colonial and non-sovereign peoples—all these and similar facts clearly point to the instability and insolidity of the multi-national bourgeois states.

Thus the irreconcilable contradiction between the process of economic amalgamation of the peoples and the imperialist methods of accomplishing this amalgamation was the cause of the inability, helplessness and impotence of the bourgeoisie in finding a correct approach to the solution of the national problem.

[Stalin: Marxism and the National and Colonial Question. pp. 137-138.]

Bourgeois society has proved to be utterly bankrupt in the matter of solving the national problem.

[Stalin: Marxism and the National and Colonial Question p. 90.]

Not only has bourgeois society proved incapable of solving the national problem, but in its attempts to "solve" it has inflated it and turned the national problem into a colonial problem, and has created against itself a new front stretching from Ireland to Hindustan.

[Stalin: Marxism and the National and Colonial Question pp. 106-107]

SOCIALISM AND THE NATIONAL PROBLEM

The only state capable of tackling and solving the national problem is a state based on collective ownership of the means and implements of production—a soviet state. In the Soviet federal state there are no longer oppressed

nationalities or ruling nationalities, national oppression is abolished. But in view of the virtual inequality (cultural, economic and political), inherited from the old bourgeois system, between the more civilised and the less civilised nationalities, the national problem assumes a form which demands the adoption of measures designed to foster the economic, political and cultural progress of the toiling masses of the backward nationalities and to give them the opportunity of catching up with the more advanced Central—proletarian—Russia.

[Stalin : Marxism and the National and Colonial
Question p. 107.]

While capital, private property and exploitation disunite peoples, splitting them into hostile camps, an example of which is furnished by Great Britain, France, and even such small multi-national states as Poland and Yugoslavia, with their irreconcilable internal national contradictions, which eat at the very foundations of these states—while, I say, there, in the West, where capitalist democracy prevails and where the states rest on private property, the very basis of the state fosters national enmity, conflicts and struggle, here, in the realm of the Soviets, where the power is built not on capital, but on labour, where the power is built not on private property, but on collective property, where the power is built not on the exploitation of man by man, but on hostility to such exploitation, here, on the contrary, the very nature of the government power fosters a natural striving on the part of the toiling masses towards unity in a single socialist family. Is it not a striking fact that whereas there, in the West, in the world of bourgeois democracy,

we are witnessing the gradual decline and disintegration of the multi-national states into their component parts (as in the case of Great Britain, which will settle matters I know not how with India, Egypt and Ireland, or as in the case of Poland, which will settle matters I also know not how with her White-Russians, Ukrainians, Germans and Jews), here, in our federation, embracing no less than thirty nationalities, we are, on the contrary, witnessing a process of consolidation of political ties between the independent republics, a process which is leading to an ever closer union of independent nationalities into a single independent state. Here you have two types of political union, of which one type, the capitalist type, leads to the disintegration of the state into its component parts, while the second type, the Soviet type, on the contrary, leads to a gradual but stable amalgamation of formerly independent nationalities into a single independent state.

[Stalin : Marxism, and the National and Colonial
Question. Pp. 123-124]

Whereas private property and capital inevitably disunite people, inflame national enmity and intensify national oppression, collective property and labour just as inevitably bring people closer and undermine national oppression. The existence of capitalism without national oppression is just as inconceivable as the existence of socialism without the emancipation of oppressed nations, without national freedom. Chauvinism and national conflict are inevitable, unavoidable, as long as the peasantry (and the petty bourgeoisie generally) is permeated with nationalist prejudices

and follows the bourgeoisie, while, on the contrary, national peace and national freedom may be regarded as assured when the peasantry follows the proletariat, that is to say, when the dictatorship of the proletariat has been secured. Hence the triumph of the Soviets and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat is a basic condition for abolition of national oppression, the institution of national equality and the guarantee of the rights of national minorities.

The experience of the Soviet revolution entirely bears out this assertion. The establishment of a Soviet system in Russia and the declaration of the right of nations to political secession have brought about a complete change in the relations between the toiling masses of the nationalities of Russia; they have undermined the old national enmity, deprived national oppression of its foundation, won for the Russian workers the confidence of their brothers of other nationalities, not only in Russia, but also in Europe and Asia, and have raised this confidence to a pitch of enthusiasm and readiness to fight for the common cause. The creation of Soviet republics in Azerbaidjan and Armenia has been productive of similar results and has put an end to national collisions and the "age-old" enmity between the Turkish and Armenian toiling masses and between the Armenian and Azerbaidjanian toiling masses. The same must be said of the temporary success of the Soviets in Hungary, Bavaria, Finland and Latvia. On the other hand, it may safely be said that the Russian workers could not have defeated Kolchak and Denikin and the Azerbaidjan and Armenian Republics could not have been put on their feet without the elimination of national enmity and national

oppression at home, and without the confidence and enthusiasm displayed towards them by the toiling masses of the nationalities of the West and the East. The consolidation of the Soviet republics and the abolition of national oppression are two aspects of one and the same process of emancipation of the toilers from imperialist bondage.....

A federation of Soviet republics based on common military and economic affairs is that general form of political union which makes it possible (a) to guarantee the integrity and economic development both of the individual republics and of the federation as a whole, (b) to embrace the various social, cultural and economic conditions of the various nations and peoples, which are at different levels of development, and accordingly to apply one form of federation or another, and (c) to bring about the peaceful co-existence and fraternal collaboration of the nations and peoples which have in one form or another thrown in their lot with that of the federation. The experience of Russia in applying various forms of federation, passing from federation based on Soviet autonomy (the Kirghiz Republic, the Bashkir Republic, the Tatar Republic, the Gortsi, Daghestan) to federation based on contractual relations between independent Soviet republics (the Ukraine, Azerbaidjan), with intermediate phases (Turkestan, White Russia), has fully proved the value and flexibility of federation as a general form of political union for the Soviet republics.

THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION AND NATIONAL QUESTION

The National question is not something self-contained and fixed for all time. Being only part of the general question of the transformation of the existing order, the national question is wholly determined by the conditions of the social environment, the character of the power in the country and by the whole course of social development generally. This is being strikingly borne out during the period of revolution in Russia, when the national question and the national movement in the border regions of Russia are rapidly and patently changing their character in accordance with the course and issue of the revolution.

In the period of bourgeois revolution in Russia (which began in February 1917) the national movement in the border regions bore the character of a bourgeois movement of emancipation. The nationalities of Russia, which had for ages been oppressed and exploited by the "old regime," now for the first time felt their strength and hurled themselves into combat with their oppressors. "Abolish national oppression" was the slogan of the movement. In a trice, "all-national" institutions sprang up all over the border regions of Russia. The movement was headed by the national, bourgeois-democratic intelligentsia. "National Councils" in Latvia, the Esthonian Region, Lithuania, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaidjan, the Caucasus, Kirghizstan and the Middle Volga Region; the "Rada" in the Ukraine and in White Russia; the "Sfatul Tarii" in Bessarabia; the "Kurultai" in the Crimea and in Bashkiria; the "Autonomous Government" in Turkestan—such were the "national"

institutions around which the national bourgeoisie rallied its forces. It was question of emancipation from tsarism, the "basic cause" of national oppression, and the formation of national bourgeois states. The right of nations to self-determination was interpreted to mean the right of the national bourgeoisie in the border regions to take power into its own hands and to take advantage of the February Revolution in order to form its "own" national state. A further development of the revolution did not and could not come into the calculations of the above-mentioned bourgeois institutions. And the fact was overlooked that tsarism was being replaced by a naked and barefaced imperialism, that this imperialism was a stronger and more dangerous foe of the nationalities, and the basis of new national oppression.

The abolition of tsarism and the accession to power of the bourgeoisie did not, however, lead to the abolition of national oppression. The old and crude form of national oppression was replaced by a new, refined, but all the more dangerous, form of oppression. The government of Lvov-Milyukov-Kerensky, far from abandoning the policy of national oppression, organised a new campaign against Finland (dispersal of the Diet in the summer of 1917) and the Ukraine (the wholesale suppression of the cultural institutions of the Ukraine). Nay more, this government, imperialist by its very nature, called upon the population to continue the war in order to subjugate new lands, new colonies and new nationalities. It was driven to this not only because of the intrinsic nature of imperialism, but also because of the existence of the old imperialist states of Western Europe, which were irresistibly striving to subjugate new lands and nationalities and threatening to

narrow its sphere of influence. The picture presented by the course of the imperialist war was a struggle of the imperialist states for the subjugation of small nationalities as a condition for the existence of these states. The abolition of tsarism and the appearance on the scene of the Milyukov-Kerensky government in no way improved this unsightly picture. Since the "all-national" institutions in the border regions displayed a tendency to political independence, it was natural that they should encounter the insuperable hostility of the imperialist government of Russia. Since, on the other hand, while establishing the power of the national bourgeoisie, they remained deaf to the vital interests of their "own" workers and peasants, they evoked grumbling and discontent among the latter. What were known as "national regiments" only added fuel to the flames: they were impotent against the danger from above, and only intensified and aggravated the danger from below. The "all-national" institutions were left defenceless against blows from without and explosion from within. The incipient bourgeois national states began to fade before they could blossom.

Thus the old bourgeois-democratic interpretation of the principle of self-determination became a fiction and lost its revolutionary significance. It was clear that under such circumstances there could be no question of the abolition of national oppression or of the independence of the small, national states. It became obvious that the emancipation of the toiling masses of the oppressed nationalities and the abolition of national oppression were inconceivable without a break with imperialism, without the overthrow by each of

its "own" national bourgeoisie and the assumption of power by the toiling masses themselves.

This was strikingly borne out after the October Revolution.

The February Revolution harboured irremediable internal contradictions. The revolution was accomplished by the efforts of the workers and peasants (soldiers), whereas, as a result of the revolution, the power passed not to the workers and peasants, but to the bourgeoisie. In making the revolution the workers and peasants wanted to put an end to the war and to secure peace, whereas the bourgeoisie upon coming to power strove to use the revolutionary ardour of the masses in order to continue the war and to oppose peace. The economic disruption of the country and the food crisis demanded the expropriation of capital and of the industrial enterprises for the benefit of the workers and the confiscation of the landed estates for the benefit of the peasants; whereas the bourgeois Milyukov-Kerensky government stood guard over the interests of the landlords and capitalists, resolutely protecting the latter against all attempts on the part of the workers and peasants. It was a bourgeois revolution, accomplished by the instrumentality of the workers and peasants for the benefit of the exploiters.

Meanwhile, the country continued to groan under the burden of the imperialist war, economic disintegration and the collapse of the food supply. The front was falling to pieces and melting away. Factories and mills were coming to a standstill. Famine was spreading through the country. The February Revolution with its inner contradictions proved to be obviously inadequate for "the salvation

of the country." The Milyukov-Kerensky government proved to be obviously incapable of solving the basic problems of the revolution.

A new, *socialist* revolution was necessary to lead the country out of the impasse of imperialist war and economic ruin.

This revolution came as a result of the October seizure of power.

By overthrowing the power of the landlords and the bourgeoisie and replacing it by a government of workers and peasants, the October Revolution at one blow solved the contradictions of the February Revolution. The abolition of the omnipotence of the landlords and kulaks and the transfer of the use of the land to the toiling agricultural masses; the expropriation of the factories and mills and their transfer to the control of the workers; the break with imperialism and the termination of the predatory war; the publication of the secret treaties and the exposure of the policy of foreign territorial annexations; finally, the proclamation of self-determination for the toiling masses of the oppressed nations and the recognition of the independence of Finland—such were the principal measures carried into effect by the Soviet government in the course of the revolution.

This was a truly *socialist* revolution.

The revolution, which started in the centre, could not long be confined to this narrow territory. Once having triumphed in the centre, it was bound to spread to the border regions. And, indeed, from the very first days of

the seizure of power. the revolutionary wave spread from the North all over Russia, sweeping over one border region after another. But here it struck a dam in the form of the "National Councils" and regional "governments" (Don, Kuban, Siberia) which had come into being before the October Revolution. The fact is that these "national governments" would not hear of a socialist revolution. Bourgeois by nature, they had not the slightest intention of destroying the old bourgeois world; on the contrary, they considered it their duty to preserve and consolidate it by every means in their power. Essentially imperialist, they had not the slightest intention of breaking with imperialism; on the contrary, they were never averse to seizing and subjugating bits and morsels of "foreign" nationalities whenever opportunity offered. No wonder that "national governments" in the border regions declared war on the socialist government in the centre. And, once they had declared war, they naturally became centres of reaction attracting all that was counter-revolutionary in Russia. It is no secret that all the counter-revolutionaries ejected from Russia streamed to these centres, and there, around these centres, formed themselves into the Whiteguard "national" regiments.

But, in addition to the "national" governments, there are national workers and peasants in the border regions. Organised even before the October Revolution in their own revolutionary Soviets of Deputies on the model of the Soviets of Deputies in the central parts of Russia, they had never severed their connections with their brothers in the North. They too were striving to defeat the bourgeoisie, they too were fighting for the triumph of socialism. No wonder that their conflict with their "own" national govern-

ments grew daily more acute. The October Revolution only served to strengthen the alliance between the workers and peasants of the border regions and the workers and peasants of Russia, and inspired them with faith in the triumph of socialism. And the war of the "national governments" against the Soviet power brought their conflict with these "governments" to the point of a complete rupture, to open rebellion against them.

Thus was formed a socialist alliance of the workers and peasants of all Russia against the counter-revolutionary alliance of the national-bourgeois "governments" of the border regions of Russia.

The fight of the border "governments" is depicted by some as a fight for national emancipation against the "soulless centralism" of Soviet government. This is untrue. No government in the world has permitted such extensive decentralisation, no government in the world has ever granted its peoples such complete national freedom as does Soviet government in Russia. The fight of the border "governments" was, and is, a fight of bourgeois counter-revolution against socialism. The national flag is tacked to the cause only to deceive the masses, because it is a popular flag which conveniently conceals the counter revolutionary designs of the national bourgeoisie.

But the fight of the "national" and regional "governments," proved to be an unequal one. Attacked from two quarters—from without by the Soviet government, and from within by their "own" workers and peasants—the "national governments" were obliged to retreat after the first engagements. The revolt of the Finnish workers and

agricultural labourers and the flight of the bourgeois "Senate"; the revolt of the Ukrainian workers and peasants and the flight of the bourgeois "Rada"; the revolt of the workers and peasants in the Don, Kuban, and Siberia and the collapse of Kaledin, Kornilov and the Siberian "government"; the revolt of the poor peasants of Turkestan and the flight of the "Autonomous Government"; the agrarian revolution in the Caucasus and the utter impotence of the "National Councils" of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaidjan--all these are facts of common knowledge which demonstrated the complete isolation of the border "governments" from their "own" masses. Utterly defeated, the "national governments" were "obliged" to appeal for aid against their "own" workers and peasants to the imperialists of Western Europe, the age long oppressors and exploiters of the small nations of the world.

Thus began the period of foreign interference and the occupation of the border regions—a period which once more revealed the counter-revolutionary nature of the "national" and regional "government."

Now at last it has become obvious to all that the national bourgeoisie is striving not for the liberation of "its own people" from national oppression, but for the liberty of squeezing profits out of them, for the liberty of preserving its own privileges and capital.

Now at last it has become obvious that the emancipation of the oppressed nationalities is inconceivable without a rupture with imperialism, without the overthrow of the bourgeoisie of the pressed nationalities and without the transfer of power to the toiling masses of these nationalities.

Thus the old bourgeois conception of the principle of self-determination, with its slogan "All power to the national bourgeoisie," was exposed and cast aside by the very course of the revolution. The socialist conception of self-determination, with its slogan "All power to the toiling masses of the oppressed nationalities," entered into its own and obtained the opportunity of being applied in practice.

Thus the October Revolution, having put an end to the old, bourgeois movement for national emancipation, inaugurated the era of a new, socialist movement of the workers and peasants of the oppressed nationalities, directed against all oppression, which also means national oppression, against the rule of the bourgeoisie, their "own" and foreign, and against imperialism in general.

[Stalin : Marxism and the National and Colonial Question, pp. 69-74.]

THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION AND THE NATIONAL POLICY OF THE RUSSIAN COMMUNISTS

The strength of the October Revolution consists incidentally in the fact that, unlike the revolutions in the West, it rallied around the Russian proletariat the millions of the petty bourgeoisie, and above all its most powerful and most numerous stratum—the peasantry. As a result, the Russian bourgeoisie was isolated and left without an army, while the Russian proletariat was transformed into the arbiter of the destinies of the country. But for this the Russian workers could not have retained power.

Peace, the agrarian revolution and freedom for the nationalities—these were the three principal factors which served to rally the peasants of more than twenty nationalities in the vast expanse of Russia around the red flag of the Russian proletariat.

There is no need to speak here of the first two factors. Enough has been written about them in the literature on the subject. And indeed they speak for themselves. As to the third factor—the national policy of the Russian Communists—apparently its importance has not yet been fully realised. It would therefore not be amiss to say a few words on this subject.

To begin with, of the 140,000,000 people constituting the population of the R. S. F. S. R. (Finland, Esthonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland are excluded) 65,000,000 consist of nationalities other than Great-Russians.

Furthermore, these nationalities mainly inhabit the border regions, which are most vulnerable from the military point of view, and these border regions abound in raw materials, fuel and foodstuffs.

Finally, these border regions are less developed than Central Russia (or not developed at all) from the industrial and military point of view, owing to which they are not in a position to defend their independent existence without the military and economic assistance of Central Russia; just as Central Russia is not in a position to preserve its military and economic power without the assistance of the border regions in the way of fuel, raw materials and foodstuffs.

These circumstances, coupled with certain provisions in the national programme of the Communists, determined the character of the national policy of the Russian Communists.

The essence of this policy can be expressed in a few words, the renunciation of all "claims" and "rights" to regions inhabited by non-Russian nationalities, the recognition (not in word but in deed) of the right of these nationalities, to exist as independent states, the formation of a voluntary military and economic union of these nationalities with Central Russia, the granting of aid to the backward nationalities in their cultural and economic development, without which what is known as "national equality" becomes an empty sound, and the basing of all this on the complete emancipation of the peasants and the concentration of the entire political power in the hands of the toiling elements of the border nationalities—such is the national policy of the Russian Communists.

It need hardly be said that when the Russian workers came to power they would not have been able to win the sympathy and confidence of their comrades of other nationalities, and above all of the oppressed masses of the non-sovereign nationalities, had they not in practice proved their readiness to put such a national policy into effect, had they not renounced their "rights" to Finland, had they not evacuated their troops from Northern Persia, had they not put an end to the claims of the Russian Imperialists to certain regions of Mongolia and China and had they not assisted the backward nationalities of the former Russian

Empire to develop their culture and political life in their own language.

This confidence alone could form the basis for that indestructible union of the peoples of the R. S. F. S. R. against which all "diplomatic" machinations and carefully executed "blockades" have proved impotent.

More, the Russian workers could not have defeated Kolchak, Denikin and Wrangel had they not enjoyed the sympathy and confidence of the oppressed masses of the border regions of former Russia. It must not be forgotten that the field of action of these mutinous generals was confined to the area of the border regions inhabited mainly by non-Russian nationalities, and the latter could not but hate Kolchak, Denikin and Wrangel for their imperialist policy and policy of Russification. The Entente, intervening and supporting these generals, could rely on the elements in the border regions who were the vehicles of Russification. And thereby it only inflamed the hatred of the population of the border regions for the mutinous generals and increased the sympathy of this population for the Soviet government.

This circumstance accounted for the intrinsic weakness of the Kolchak, Denikin and Wrangel rear, and therefore for the weakness of their fronts, that is, in the long run, for their defeat.

But the beneficial results of the national policy of the Russian Communists are not confined to the territory of the R. S. F. S. R. and the associated Soviet republics. They are also affecting, indirectly, it is true, the attitude of the neighbouring countries towards the R. S. F. S. R. The radical

improvement in the attitude of Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan, India and other Eastern border countries towards Russia, which was formerly a bogey to these countries, is a *fact* which even so valiant a politician as Lord Curzon does not now venture to dispute. It need hardly be shown that if the national policy above outlined had not been systematically put into effect within the R. S. F. S. R. during the four years the Soviet government has existed, this radical change in the attitude of the neighbouring countries towards Russia would have been inconceivable.

Such, in the main, are the results of the national policy of the Communists.

[Stalin : Marxism and the National and Colonial
Question pp. 117-19]

The R. S. F. S. R. and its allied Soviet republics are representative of a population of about 140,000,000 people. Of these the non-Great-Russian peoples amount to about 65,000,000 (Ukrainians, White-Russians, Kirghiz, Uzbeks, Turkmens, Tadjiks, Azerbaidjanians, Volga Tatars, Crimean Tatars, Bokharans, Khivans, Bashkirs, Armenians, Chechens, Kabardians, Ossets, Circassians, Ingushes, Karachais, Balkarians, Kalmucks, Karelians, Avarians, Darghis, Kazikumukhians, Kurins, Kumyks, Maris, Chuvashes, Vots, Volga Germans, Buryats, Yakutians, etc.). The policy of tsarism, the policy of the landlords and the bourgeoisie, towards these peoples was to destroy every germ of statehood among them, to cripple their culture, restrict the use of their native tongue, hold them in a state of ignorance, and, finally, as far as possible, to Russify them. The effects of this policy

are reflected in the low level of development and political backwardness of these peoples.

Now that the landlords and bourgeoisie have been overthrown and a Soviet government has been proclaimed by the masses of the people in these countries also, the task of the Party is to help the toiling masses of the non-Great-Russian peoples to catch up with Central Russia, which is ahead of them, and to help them (a) to develop and consolidate their own Soviet state system in forms consistent with the national character of these peoples; (b) to organise their own courts, administrative bodies, economic organs and government organs functioning in the native language and recruited from among local people acquainted with the customs and psychology of the local population, and (c) to develop a press, schools, theatres, clubs and cultural and educational institutions generally, functioning in the native language.

If from the 65,000,000 of the non-Great-Russian population we exclude the Ukraine, White Russia, a small part of Azerbaidjan, and Armenia, which in a more or less degree have passed through the period of industrial capitalism, there remain about 30,000,000, consisting principally of Turkic peoples (Turkestan, the greater part of Azerbaidjan, Dghestan, the Gortsi, Tatars, Bashkirs, Kirghiz, and others), who have not passed through a capitalist development, who do not, or practically do not, possess an industrial proletariat of their own, who in the majority of cases preserve the pastoral and patriarchal tribal form of life (Kirghizia, Bashkiria, the Northern Caucasus), or who have not yet progressed beyond a primitive semi-patriarchal, semi-feudal

form of life (Azerbaijan, the Crimea, etc.), but who have already been drawn into the common current of Soviet development.

The duty of the Party towards the toiling masses of these peoples in (addition to the duties set forth in Par. I) is to assist them in eliminating the survivals of patriarchal-feudal relations and in joining in the work of building up a Soviet economic system on the basis of Soviets of toiling peasants, by creating among these peoples strong Communist organisations capable of utilising the experience gained by the Russian workers and peasants in Soviet and economic development and at the same time capable of adapting their constructive work to the peculiarities of the concrete economic conditions, class structure, culture and habits of each particular people, instead of mechanically transplanting the economic measures of Central Russia, which are adapted to a different, and higher, stage of economic development.

If from these 300,000,000, consisting principally of Turkic peoples, we exclude Azerbaijan, the greater part of Turkestan, the Volga and the Crimean Tatar Republics, Bokhara, Khiva, Daghestan, a part of the Gorts (Kabardians, Circassians, Balkarians) and several other peoples which have already become settled and permanently attached to a definite territory, there remain about 10,000,000 Kirghiz, Bashkirs, Chechens, Ossets and Ingushes, whose lands until recently had been subject to colonisation by Russian settlers, the latter having already seized the best of their arable land, systematically forcing them into the sterile desert. The policy of tsarism, the policy of the landlords

and the bourgeoisie, was to settle these parts with the greatest possible number of kulaks from among the Russian peasants and the Cossacks, and to make the latter a reliable basis for Great-Power ambitions. This policy led to the gradual extermination of the natives (Kirghiz, Bashkirs) who had been forced into the sterile wilderness.

The duty of the Party in relation to the toiling masses of these peoples (in addition to the duties enumerated in Pars. 1 and 2) is to unite their efforts with the efforts of the toiling masses of the local Russian population in the struggle for emancipation from the kulaks in general and from the predatory Great Russian kulaks in particular, to help them in every way to throw off the yoke of the kulak colonisers and thus to provide them with land suitable and essential for human subsistence.

In addition to the nations and peoples already mentioned, possessing a definite class structure and occupying definite territory, there exist within the R. S. F. S. R. various casual national groups, national minorities, interspersed among compact majorities of other nations, who in most cases neither possess a definite class structure nor occupy a definite territory (Letts, Esthonians, Poles, Jews, and others). The policy of tsarism was to exterminate these minorities by every possible means, including massacre (Jewish pogroms).

Now that national privileges have been abolished and the equality of nationalities established, and the right of national minorities to free national development is guaranteed by the very nature of the Soviet system, the duty of

the Party towards the toiling masses of these national groups is to help them to make the fullest possible use of the right to free development which they have secured.

[Stalin : Marxism and the National and
Colonial Question, pp. 94-96.]

THE INTERNATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

The great international significance of the October Revolution chiefly consists in the fact that :

1. It has widened the scope of the national question and converted it from the particular question of combating national oppression into the general question of emancipating the oppressed nations, colonies and semi-colonies from imperialism;

2. It has opened up vast possibilities and revealed the proper way of achieving emancipation, and thereby greatly helped the cause of emancipation of the oppressed nations of the West and the East, having drawn them into the common channel of the victorious struggle against imperialism;

3. *It has thereby erected a bridge between the socialist West and the enslaved East, having created a new line of revolutions against world imperialism, extending from the proletarians of the West, through the Russian revolution, to the oppressed nations of the East.*

This in fact explains the indescribable enthusiasm which is now being displayed for the Russian proletariat by the toiling and exploited masses of the East and West.

And this largely explains the brutal fury with which the imperialist robbers of the world have hurled themselves against Soviet Russia.

[Stalin : Marxism and the National and
Colonial Question pp. 76-77.]

FOUR BASIC PRINCIPLES OF SOVIET FEDERATION

Thus, our views on the national question reduce themselves to the following propositions: (a) the recognition of the right of peoples to secession; (b) regional autonomy for peoples which remain within the given state, (c) specific laws guaranteeing freedom of development for national minorities; (d) a single, indivisible proletarian collective body, a single party, for the proletarians of all the nationalities in the given state.

[Stalin: Marxism and the National and
Colonial Question p. 66]

SOVIET FEDERATION—A VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATION

The basis of this Union is voluntary consent and equality of legal status of the members of the Union. Voluntary consent and equality—because our national programme is based on the right of nations to independent political exis-

tence, formerly called the rights of nations to self-determination. On this basis we must definitely say that no union of peoples, no amalgamation of peoples into a single state, can be durable unless it is based on absolutely voluntary consent, unless the peoples involved themselves desire to unite. The second basis of the Union is the equality of legal status of the peoples forming the Union. And that is but natural. I am not referring to actual equality—of that I shall speak later—for the establishment of actual equality between nationalities which have gone on ahead and nationalities which lag behind is a very difficult problem, requiring many years for its solution. I am speaking at present of equality of legal status. Equality in this sense is expressed in the fact that all the republics, in this case the four republics forming the Union—Transcaucasia, White Russia, the Ukraine and the R. S. F. S. R.—enjoy the benefits of the Union to an equal degree and at the same time to an equal degree forego certain of their independent rights in favour of the Union. If the R. S. F. S. R., the Ukraine, White Russia and the Transcaucasian Republic are not each to have its own People's Commissariats of Foreign Affairs, it is clear that the abolition of these Commissariats and the establishment of a joint Commissariat for the Union of Republics will be accompanied by a certain restriction of the independence formerly enjoyed by these republics and that the extent of this restriction will be the same for all the republics forming the Union. It is clear that if these republics formerly had their own People's Commissariats of Foreign Trade, and these Commissariats are now abolished, both in the R. S. F. S. R. and in the other republics in order to make way for joint Commissariat of the Union of Republics, this too

will involve a certain restriction of the independence formerly enjoyed in full measure, but now curtailed in favour of the Union ; and so on, and so forth. Some people ask a purely scholastic question, namely, whether after amalgamation the republics remain independent. This is a scholastic question. Their independence is restricted, for every amalgamation involves a 'certain restriction of the rights of the amalgamating parties. But the elements of independence of each of these republics undoubtedly remain, for each republic retains the right to leave the Union at its own discretion. There you have the elements of independence, the maximum of independence, which is potentially retained by each of the republics forming part of the Union and which each of them is always at liberty to exercise.

[Stalin : Marxism and the National and Colonial
Question pp. 151—152.]

But federation may be durable, and the results of federation real, only if it is based on mutual confidence and the voluntary consent of the countries constituting the federation. If the R. S. F. S. R. is the only country in the world in which the experiment in the peaceable co-existence and fraternal collaboration of a large number of nations and peoples has succeeded, it is because it contains neither ruling nor subject peoples, neither mother countries nor colonies, neither imperialism nor national oppression. In R. S. F. S. R. federation rests on mutual confidence and a voluntary desire for union on the part of the toiling masses of the various nations. This voluntary character of the federation must absolutely be preserved in the future, for only

a federation of this kind can serve as a transition stage to that supreme unity of the toilers of all countries in a single world economic system the necessity for which is growing more and more palpable.

[Stalin : Marxism, and the National and Colonial
Question. p. 93-94]

It need hardly be shown that the Russian workers could not have gained the sympathies of their comrades of other nationalities in the West and the East if, having assumed power, they had not proclaimed the right of peoples to political secession, if they had not demonstrated in practice their readiness to give effect to this inalienable right of peoples, if they had not renounced their "rights," let us say, to Finland (1917), if they had not withdrawn the troops from Northern Persia (1917), if they had not renounced all claims to certain parts of Mongolia and China, and so on, and so forth.

[Stalin : Marxism and the National and Colonial
Question p. 113]

SOVIET REGIONAL AUTONOMY

What must be our attitude towards nations which for one reason or another will prefer to remain within the general framework ?.....

The only real solution is *regional* autonomy, autonomy for such crystallised units as Poland, Lithuania, the Ukraine, the Caucasus, etc.

The advantage of regional autonomy consists firstly in the fact that it does not deal with a fiction deprived of territory, but with a definite population inhabiting a definite territory.

Secondly, it does not divide people according to nation, it does not strengthen national partitions; on the contrary, it only serves to break down these partitions and unites the population in such a manner as to open the way for division of a different kind, division according to class.

Finally, it provides the opportunity of utilising the natural wealth of the region and of developing its productive forces in the best possible way without awaiting the decisions of a common centre—functions which are not proper to national cultural autonomy.

Thus *regional autonomy is an essential element in the solution of the national problem.*

[Stalin: *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question* pp. 56-58]

Soviet autonomy is not a rigid thing fixed once and for all time; it permits of the most varied forms and degrees of development. It passes from narrow administrative autonomy (the Volga Germans, the Chuvashes and the Karelians), to a wider, political autonomy (the Bashkirs, the Volga Tartars and the Kirghiz) from wide political autonomy to a still wider form of autonomy (the Ukraine and Turkestan), and finally from the Ukrainian type of autonomy to the supreme form of autonomy—contractual relations (Azerbaidjan). This elasticity of Soviet autonomy constitutes one of its prime merits, for this elasticity makes it possible to embrace

all the various types of border regions in Russia, which vary greatly in their levels of cultural and economic development.

[Stalin: Marxism and the National and Colonial Question p. 81]

Certain comrades regard the autonomous republics in Russia and Soviet autonomy generally as a temporary, if necessary, evil which must for certain reasons be tolerated, but which must be resisted so that it may one day be abolished. It need hardly be shown that such a view is essentially false and that at any rate it is entirely foreign to the policy of the Soviet government on the national question. Soviet autonomy is not an abstraction or artificial thing, still less is it an empty and declarative promise. Soviet autonomy is the most real and concrete way of uniting the border regions to Central Russia. Nobody will deny that the Ukraine, Azerbaidjan, Turkestan, the Kirghiz Republic, the Bashkir Republic, the Tatar Republic and other border regions, since they are striving for the cultural and material prosperity of their masses, must have their native schools, courts, administration and government bodies recruited principally from among the native people. Furthermore, the real Sovietisation of these regions, their conversion into Soviet countries closely bound to Central Russia and forming with it one state whole, is *inconceivable* without the widespread organisation of local schools, without the creation of courts, administrative bodies, organs of government, etc., recruited from among people acquainted with the life and language of the population. But to conduct the schools, courts, the administration and organs of govern-

ment in the native language means precisely putting Soviet autonomy into practice; for Soviet autonomy is but the sum of these various institutions enveloped in a Ukrainian, Turkestanian or Kirghiz form.

How, after this, can one seriously say that Soviet autonomy is ephemeral, that it must be resisted, and so forth ?

One thing or the other :

Either the Ukrainian, Azerbaidjanian, Kirghiz, Uzbek, Bashkir and the other languages are a reality, and it is therefore absolutely essential to develop in these regions native schools, courts, administrative bodies and organs of government recruited from among native people—in which case Soviet autonomy in these regions must be put into effect in its entirety, without any reservations whatsoever;

Or the Ukrainian, etc., languages are a pure fiction, and therefore schools and other institutions in the native language are unnecessary—in which case Soviet autonomy must be discarded as useless lumber.

The search for a third way is due either to ignorance of the subject or to deplorable superficiality.

[Stalin: *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*, pp. 84-85.]

Soviet Russia is performing an experiment without parallel anywhere in the world in organising the co-existence of a number of nations and tribes within a single proletarian state on a basis of mutual confidence and voluntary and fraternal good-will.....But this experiment can be

certain of complete success only if our practical policy with regard to the national problem in the various localities does not run counter to the demands of Soviet autonomy already proclaimed in its varied forms and degrees of application, and if every practical measure we take in the various localities contributes to bringing the masses of the people in the border regions to partake of a higher, proletarian spiritual and material culture in forms which correspond to the social habits and national features of these masses.

[Stalin: Marxism and the National and Colonial
Question p. 87.]

PROTECTION OF INTERSPERSED MINORITIES

What is it that particularly agitates a national minority?

A minority is discontented not because there is no national union but because it does not enjoy the right to use its native language. Permit it to use its native language and the discontent will pass of itself.

A minority is discontented not because there is no artificial union but because it does not possess its own schools. Give it its own schools and all grounds for discontent will disappear.

A minority is discontented not because there is no national union, but because it does not enjoy liberty of conscience, liberty of movement, etc. Give it these liberties and it will cease to be discontented.

Thus *national equality in all forms (language schools, etc.) is an essential element in the solution of*

the national problem. A state law based on complete democracy in the country is required, prohibiting all national privileges without exception and all kinds of disabilities and restrictions on the rights of national minorities.

That, and that alone, is the real, not a paper guarantee of the rights of a minority.

[Stalin: Marxism and the National and Colonial Question. pp. 58-59]

A SINGLE PARTY FOR THE PROLETARIANS OF ALL NATIONALITIES

We know whither the division of workers along national lines leads. The disintegration of a united working-class party, the division of trade unions along national lines, the aggravation of national friction, national strike-breaking, complete demoralisation within the ranks of the Social-Democratic movement—such are the fruits of organisational federalism. This is eloquently borne out by the history of Social-Democracy in Austria and the activities of the Bund in Russia.

The only cure for this is organisation on internationalist lines.

The aim must be to unite the workers of all nationalities in Russia into *united* and *integral* collective bodies in the various localities and to unite these collective bodies into a *single* party.

It goes without saying that a party structure of this kind does not preclude, but on the contrary presumes, wide autonomy for the *regions* within the single party whole.

The experience of the Caucasus proves the expediency of an organisation of this type. If the Caucasians have succeeded in overcoming the national friction between the Armenian and Tatar workers, if they have succeeded in guaranteeing the population against massacres and shootings, if in Baku, that kaleidoscope of national groups, national collisions are now no longer possible, and if it has been possible to draw the workers into the single current of a powerful movement—the international structure of Caucasian Social-Democracy was not the least factor in bringing this about.

Type of organisation influences not only practical work. It stamps an indelible impress on the whole mental life of the workers. The worker lives the life of his organisation, which stimulates his intellectual growth and educates him. And thus, moving within his organisation and continually meeting comrades belonging to other nationalities and with them fighting a common struggle under the leadership of a common collective body, he becomes deeply imbued with the idea that workers are *primarily* members of one class family, members of the one army of socialism. And this cannot but have a tremendous educational value for large sections of the working class.

And the international type of organisation therefore serves as a school of fraternal sentiments and is a tremendous agitational factor on behalf of internationalism.

But this is not the case with an organisation based on national lines. When the workers are organised according to nationality they are isolated within their national shells, fenced off from each other by organisational partitions. The

stress is laid not on what is *common* to the workers but on what distinguishes them from each other. In this type of organisation the worker is *primarily* a member of his nation: Jew, Pole, and so on. It is not surprising that *national* federalism in organisation inculcates in the workers a spirit of national aloofness.....

Thus *the principle of international solidarity of the workers is an essential element* in the solution of the national problem.

[Stalin : Marxism and the National and
Colonial Question. pp. 59-61]

SOCIALISM AND NATIONAL CULTURE

We are building a proletarian culture. That is absolutely true. But it is also true that proletarian culture, which is socialist in content, assumes different forms and methods of expression among the various peoples that have been drawn into the work of socialist construction, depending on differences of language, customs, and so forth. Proletarian in content and national in form—such is the universal human culture towards which socialism is marching. Proletarian culture does not cancel national culture, but lends it content. National culture, on the other hand, does not cancel proletarian culture, but lends it form. The demand for national culture was a bourgeois demand as long as the bourgeoisie was in power and the consolidation of nations proceeded under the aegis of the bourgeois system. The demand for national culture became a proletarian demand when the proletariat came into power and the consolidation of nations began to proceed under the aegis of Soviet government.

Whoever has not grasped the fundamental difference between these two situations will never understand either Leninism or the essence of the national question from the standpoint of Leninism.

Certain persons (Kautsky, for instance) talk of the creation of a single universal language in the period of socialism and the dying away of all other languages. I have little faith in this theory of a single, all embracing-language. Experience, at any rate, speaks against rather than for such a theory. Until now the situation has been that the socialist revolution has not diminished but rather increased the number of languages, for, by stirring up the profound depths of humanity and by pushing them into the political arena, it awakens to new life a number of hitherto unknown or little known nationalities. Who could have imagined that old tsarist Russia consisted of no less than fifty nationalities and ethnic groups ? However, by breaking the old chains and bringing a number of forgotten peoples and nationalities on the scene, the October Revolution gave them new life and a new development. Nowadays, India is spoken of as a single whole. Yet there can be hardly any doubt that in the case of a revolutionary upheaval in India many hitherto unknown nationalities, each with its own language and its own distinctive culture, will emerge on the scene. And if it is a question of the participation of various nationalities in the proletarian culture, there can be hardly any doubt that such participation will assume forms corresponding to the languages and the customs of these nationalities.....

The Buryat comrades raise the question of the assimilation of individual nationalities in the process of formation of a universal proletarian culture. Undoubtedly, certain

nationalities may, and even certainly will, undergo a process of assimilation. Such processes have occurred before. But the point is that the process of assimilation of certain nationalities does not preclude, but rather presupposes, the opposite process of reinforcement and development of a number of powerful nationalities, for the partial process of assimilation is a result of the general process of development of nationalities. It is because of this that the possible assimilation of individual nationalities does not weaken, but, on the contrary, confirms the proposition, an absolutely correct proposition, that universal proletarian culture does not preclude, but rather presupposes and fosters national culture, just as national culture does not nullify, but rather supplements and enriches universal proletarian culture.

[Stalin : Marxism and the National and
Colonial Question pp. 210-11.]

Firstly, Lenin never said that national differences must disappear and national languages become fused into one common language within the boundaries of a *single* state, *before the victory of socialism on a world scale*. Lenin, on the contrary, said something diametrically opposite, namely, that "national and state *differences* among peoples and countries.....will continue to exist for a *very long time*, even after the dictatorship of the proletariat has been established on a *world scale*." ("Left Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder," Collected Works, Vol. XXV.) How can people refer to Lenin and forget this cardinal statement of his ?.....

Secondly, Lenin never said that the abolition of national oppression and the fusion of the interests of nationalities

into a single whole is equivalent to the abolition of national differences. We have abolished national oppression, we have abolished national privileges and established national equality. We have abolished state frontiers in the old sense of the term, frontier posts and customs barriers between the nationalities of the U. S. S. R. We have established a unity of economic and political interests of the peoples of the U. S. S. R. But does this mean that we have thereby abolished national differences: national languages, culture, customs, and so on? Obviously, it does not mean that. But if national differences, language, culture, customs, and so on, remain, is it not obvious that the demand for the abolition of the national republics and regions in the present period of history is a reactionary demand, directed against the interests of the proletarian dictatorship? Do our deviators realise that to abolish the national republics and regions now would mean to deprive the vast masses of the peoples of the U.S.S.R. of the opportunity of receiving education in their *native* language, to deprive them of the opportunity of having their schools, courts, administration, public and other organisations and institutions operating in their *native* language, and to deprive them of the possibility of partaking in socialist construction? Is it not obvious that in the chase after a sham internationalism our deviators have fallen into the clutches of the reactionary Great-Russian chauvinists and have forgotten, completely forgotten, the watchword of cultural revolution in the period of proletarian dictatorship, which applies equally to *all* the peoples of the U. S. S. R., both to the Great-Russians and to the non-Great-Russians?

Thirdly. Lenin never said that the watchword of deve-

Developing national culture under the proletarian dictatorship is a reactionary watchword. On the contrary, Lenin was always in favour of *helping* the peoples of the U. S. S. R. to develop their national culture. It was under the guidance of none other than Lenin that the Tenth Party Congress drew up and adopted a resolution on the national question which explicitly states that :

“The task of the Party is to *help* the toiling masses of the non-Great-Russian peoples to catch up with Central Russia, which is ahead of them, and to *help* them (a) to develop and consolidate their own Soviet state system in forms consistent with the national social conditions of these peoples ; (b) to develop and consolidate their own courts, administrative bodies, economic organs and government organs, functioning in the native language and recruited from among local people acquainted with the customs and psychology of the local population ; (c) to develop a press, schools, theatres, clubs and cultural and educational institutions generally functioning in the native language, and (d) to organise and develop an extensive system of courses and schools, both for general education and for vocational and technical training given in the native languages.”

Is it not obvious that Lenin was entirely and completely in favour of the watchword of developing national culture *under the dictatorship of the proletariat* ?.....

It may seem strange that we, who are in favour of the *fusion* of national cultures in the future into one common culture (both in form and in content), with a single, common language, are at the same time in favour of the *blossoming* of national cultures at the present time, in the period of

the dictatorship of the proletariat. But there is nothing strange in this. The national cultures must be permitted to develop and expand and to reveal all their potential qualities, in order to create the conditions necessary for their fusion into a single, common culture with a single, common language. The blossoming of cultures national in form and socialist in content under a proletarian dictatorship in one country, *with the object of* their fusion into a single, common, socialist (both in form and content) culture, with a single common language, when the proletariat is victorious throughout the world and socialism becomes an everyday matter—such is the dialectical nature of the Leninist presentation of the question of national culture.

It may be said that, presented in this way, the question is self-contradictory." But is there not the same sort of "self-contradiction" in our treatment of the question of the state? We are in favour of the withering away of the state, yet we are at the same time in favour of strengthening the dictatorship of the proletariat, which represents the most powerful and mighty of all forms of state power that have hitherto existed. The supreme development of the power of the state, with the object of preparing the way for the withering away of state power—such is the Marxist formula. Is that "self-Contradictory"? Yes, it is "self-Contradictory." But this contradiction is a living thing, and it is a complete reflection of Marxian dialectics.

[Stalin : *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question* pp. 258-262]

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